

On December 16, 2016, the Federal Railroad Administration (FRA) released the [Tier 1 Final Environmental Impact Statement \(EIS\)](#) for NEC FUTURE, the FRA's comprehensive planning effort for the Northeast Corridor (NEC) rail line from Washington, D.C., to Boston, MA. The Tier 1 Final EIS includes a Preferred Alternative, the FRA's recommended plan for growing passenger rail service on the NEC to accommodate future demand and maintain the economic competitiveness and vitality of the Northeast.

The FRA received over 1,000 letters to date regarding the Tier 1 Final EIS. The purpose of this statement is to address the primary themes of these comments while the FRA prepares the Record of Decision (ROD).

### **Requests for a Longer Waiting Period**

A waiting period prior to the issuance of a ROD as required by the Council on Environmental Quality's regulations implementing the National Environmental Policy Act, ended on January 31, 2017. Many letters requested that the FRA defer issuing the ROD to allow additional time for the public to provide feedback. The FRA values the public feedback on the Tier 1 Final EIS and Preferred Alternative received thus far. Given the interest in NEC FUTURE, the FRA will continue to consider feedback received, to the extent practicable, up to the issuance of the ROD.

### **Public Meetings**

The FRA held public hearings during the public comment period on the Tier 1 Draft EIS, including in each of the eight states and the District of Columbia that are part of the NEC FUTURE Study Area. The FRA provided information about the Preferred Alternative and the Tier 1 Final EIS by holding public open houses in Springfield, MA, and Baltimore, MD, on January 25 and February 1 respectively, as well as two virtual meetings via webinar on February 13 and 16. The public meeting process has now concluded.

### **Public Feedback**

Public feedback received to date ranges from strong support for long-term growth in passenger rail service across the NEC to concerns about the impacts of proposed infrastructure investments, particularly those associated with new segments. The FRA continues to deliberate on how best to address the passenger rail needs of the region while being responsive to the feedback received.

### **Record of Decision**

Through NEC FUTURE, the FRA is establishing a comprehensive plan that will help prioritize future investment in the NEC, and will support essential commuter and intercity services that benefit hundreds of communities in the region. NEC FUTURE improvements would enable improved and expanded train service along the NEC from Washington, D.C., to Boston.

Through the Tier 1 EIS process, FRA identified the need to reliably maintain and improve existing service to meet growth in ridership, and to address resiliency, performance, and capacity constraints along the NEC. Site-specific decisions about infrastructure improvements along the NEC will only be made after planning studies and Tier 2 environmental reviews that evaluate the specific details and location of individual projects (see [FAQs](#) for more information on Tier 2 environmental reviews and next steps). The FRA is committed to working with the states, railroads, and communities across the NEC to plan and advance the rail improvements necessary to grow the northeast region of the United States.

Thank you for your interest in NEC FUTURE.

NEC FUTURE Team